




Kenniswerkplaats

A Sustainable Knowledge Arrangement for the *Learning Region*



Lectorate Regional Transition
Commissioned by the Municipality of Emmen

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*Investing in the future by working together
for a sustainable and competitive region*

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Its focus is on the idea of *Kenniswerkplaats*. Literally, the Dutch word *Kenniswerkplaats* (plural *Kenniswerkplaatsen*) means 'knowledge factory', a building where knowledge is produced. And in fact, this is what *Kenniswerkplaats* does. It is a learning, research and work community of regional stakeholders who in a durable setting meet students, teachers and researchers from universities and vocational education institutes. In this brochure you will find the details about *Kenniswerkplaats*, which is referred to with its Dutch term.



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The Regional Transition Programme is part of the GKC. It is being led by the lecturer Willem Foorthuis, who has taken the initiative for setting up the '*KennisKenniswerkplaats*' [Expertise Working Forum], a think tank and working / learning environment for the so-called 'Big 5'. There are now eight such Expertise Working Forums up and running in the Netherlands. The Municipality of Emmen is one of the participants in the '*KennisKenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën*'

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Preamble

Making Public and Private Places Profitable (MP4)

This is the name of the European project that the municipality of Emmen has been taking part in since 2008.

Together with eight partners in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain and Sweden, they have been investigating how they can create and manage attractive, publicly accessible areas as a joint process between local residents and professionals.

Place-making and place-keeping

The most important key concepts in MP4 are place-making and place-keeping. The term place-making refers to the process of attractively designing a publicly accessible space. Place-keeping is even more important, though. The core questions are how we handle the upkeep (maintenance, management and use) of our public spaces once they have been planned and designed, and how we develop them further. What role do the stakeholders have in this? What options and responsibilities do they have? What expertise and support do they need for it? And, particularly in times such as these when resources are scarce, what investments are made and how, and what are the ultimate benefits? If you look at the results of MP4 up to now, one thing that will strike you is that pretty much all the component studies and applied projects so far are about *place-making*. There are several reasons why that is not so surprising. Firstly, a great deal of expertise has already been acquired over recent decades about participatory processes in planning and design. Secondly, the right approach during the *place-making* phase is essential if the *place-keeping* phase is to succeed. Thirdly, *place-keeping* always has a medium-term and long-term outlook: it takes a number of years before you can say whether a particular approach works.

That, however, is exactly why it is important to describe the working method, the approach and the learning process from the very start - from the *place-making* stage - and to monitor and evaluate the results. This is the only way you will find out how to get things on the right track from the very beginning so that a successful *place-keeping* phase can be ensured.

The building blocks for place-keeping

The municipality of Emmen is taking part in two pilot MP4 projects. The first of these is the redevelopment of Barger-Compascuum, where the principles of the *Shared Space* concept have been applied. The second is a *place-keeping* experiment in Nieuw Dordrecht. This is an "Outdoor Lab", in which new ideas from MP4 are applied and tested. Emmen was picked for this experiment because a number of innovative concepts have come together in this municipality:

1. ***Emmen Revisited*** – Emmen has been working according to the *Emmen Revisited* method for 14 years now. This unusual cooperative venture between the municipality, the housing corporations, local residents and social organisations started in three city districts and has now been extended to all the districts and villages within the municipal boundary.
2. ***De Kenniswerkplaats*** – Emmen is one of the partners in the working forum called *Kennis Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën*. This is a community for learning, research and work involving academic and applied universities, local authorities, businesses and private individuals.

They work together systematically on renewal of the regional living and working environments. This requires all the parties involved to enter a long-term alliance with each other.

3. **Shared Space** – Emmen has applied the *Shared Space* concept at four sites. *Shared Space* is a concept for the layout and utilisation of public spaces. The focus is on people, their wishes and their behaviour. It started with a new approach to traffic and safety, but has in the meantime grown to become an overall philosophy about the way in which traffic and social functions can complement one another in public spaces.

A four volume knowledge pack

Emmen is playing a leading role in all three concepts. Combined, they form the building blocks for place-keeping. Each of the three has its own strengths and weaknesses:

The approach used in Emmen Revisited stands out for the systematic way in which the authorities, social groupings and private citizens work together as partners and the way this is securely embedded in policy. Its shortcomings are more in the lack of expertise analysis and knowledge transfer.

Conversely, one of the strong points of *Kenniswerkplaats* is its approach to start at the demands of the regional parties. What knowledge do they need to acquire? This has allowed *Kenniswerkplaats* to get the ball rolling for a transition process to identify and tackle regional bottlenecks.

However, the structural embedding and the organisational anchors are not yet very well developed, particularly in education.

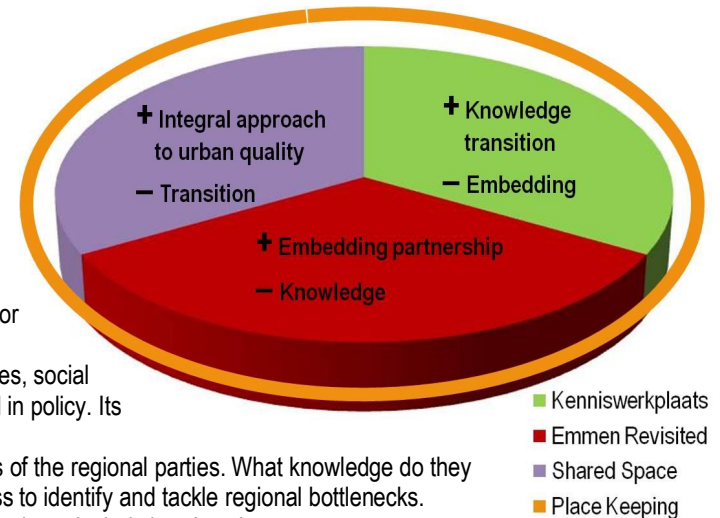
Shared Space, finally, is based on a highly developed integral approach, reflected above all in the quality of the spatial planning. However, it is not yet bearing fruit in terms of actual changes in behaviour and policy.

Each of the three concepts is presented and described in a separate volume. The input and the lessons learned from all three concepts have served as the basis for the fourth volume, looking at the current state of knowledge about *place-keeping*, which is as yet a virtually unexplored approach to permanent forms of cooperation yielding long-lasting and tangible results.

Reading guide

This volume focuses on the idea of *Kenniswerkplaats*.

- **Chapter 1** sums up the experiences of *Kenniswerkplaats* until now: what is *Kenniswerkplaats*, why was this innovation necessary, according to which methodology is it working, and who are involved. Some of the stakeholders then also give their personal opinion on *Kenniswerkplaats*.
- **Chapter 2** describes the meaning of *Kenniswerkplaats* from the perspective of education: what are the benefits for teachers and students, and in what sense can education be strengthened by *Kenniswerkplaats*?
- **Chapter 3** focuses on *Kenniswerkplaats* in practice: how is the working process in *Kenniswerkplaats*, what is the organisational structure and what are the methodological starting points?
- **Chapter 4** examines the learning process: what are the practical lessons learned until now and to which new points of view for the follow-up has this led? In this chapter also a first corner stone is developed for the process *Place-keeping*, the domain that is described in more detail in the workbook 'Place Keeping – Working in new alliances'.
- **The final chapter** provides some of the most important and relevant facts and figures on *Kenniswerkplaats*.



The Experience

What is Kenniswerkplaats?



To the left: lecturer Willem Foorthuis, on the right lecturer Gerrie Koopman; lectorate Regionale Transitie, Hogeschool Van Hall Larenstein

enter into a sustainable partnership, an alliance with each other.

In order to arrive at this type of multi-year, sustainable process between government bodies, education, research and the corporate sector, the partnership needs to be organised and structured. All parties have to learn from each other, and physical and mental conditions have to be set for this process. Students and instructors need to take their knowledge and questions to meet the field, and vice versa. And this goes not for just an individual project, but in an on-going learning process.

It was this rationale from which the concept of *Kenniswerkplaats* emerged from the Van Hall and Larenstein lectorate in Regional Transition, in a process of thinking and acting. Initially, it was an experiment, but when it caught on throughout the country, in partnership with the Green Knowledge Cooperative (GKC) the Regional Transition programme was drafted, within it the 'Regional Knowledge Arrangements' as a structural component of *Kenniswerkplaats*.

The profits are dual since this approach helps the educational sector not only the regional practice, but also itself by seeing the process around de *Kenniswerkplaats* as an innovation programme of education:

- How do we transfer the available knowledge into concrete renewal of education?

Kenniswerkplaats is a learning, research and work community with a focus on revitalising the regional living and working environment. It is a place where area development processes and other forms of regional development are conducted. Students, teachers, researchers, lecturers and professors of the green higher education and research institutions partner with non-green knowledge institutions and stakeholders such as entrepreneurs, governmental bodies, experts, users and private individuals to come up with innovative solutions for rural, urban and suburban issues. The projects are knowledge-intensive: all are in some way concerned with developing, unlocking, applying, evaluating and distributing knowledge.

Sustainable arrangements

Realising projects in cooperation with diverse stakeholders including the educational sector is not in itself anything new. But up to now we see temporary cooperative relationships dealing with relatively simple issues. And perhaps most saliently, in general it is the students who are expected to do the learning.

In *Kenniswerkplaats*, the goal is different. Firstly, all parties involved sign a mutual learning contract. And, secondly, they

- How do we transform the questions of students and the profession groups into renewal of education and renewal of learning methods?
- How do we achieve an inspirational and contemporary education so that the field receives innovative impulses from it?

These are the questions where *Kenniswerkplaats* is seeking answers on.

The method

The approach is based on 'learning in, with and from practice'. As part of the process new knowledge is created and circulated. This method is known from action learning and action research. It is important to develop and learn from and with each other.

All stakeholders contribute their specific demands, qualities, knowledge and creativity. Schools and universities leave their buildings and go out into the 'real world' of the region to work on concrete and integrated projects together with the commissioners, stake-holders and sectors on location. These are students, instructors and researchers at all levels, from lower secondary vocational education to university, and from a range of professional disciplines. For example, rural innovators meet landscape architects, land and water managers, forestry officials and conservationists, environmental experts, traffic experts, ICT specialists and in some cases even artists and performers. These interactive processes do not become a 'struggle for space'; on the contrary, they engender cooperation for arriving at widely supported, creative solutions.

The method works

Kenniswerkplaats functions as a knowledge project agency, meeting place, workshop, working method and knowledge network for and by the region. Dialogue and meetings take place between very diverse parties. We see cross-fertilisation between education, research, SME, citizens and government, which in its turn generates new knowledge, competencies, skills and new attitude. Ultimately, this leads to sustainable area results and new regional policy.

Students play an important role in this process. They have a fresh eye and often explore issues from a unique perspective. Connecting education, research, SME, the public and governmental authorities makes it possible to further improve the depth and quality of complex innovation processes.

The playing field is the region, because work on any local project happens against the background of the region. The region connects, utilises the existing knowledge from the field and from institutions, and safeguards its need for innovation and knowledge. The knowledge institutions can work sustainably on creating attractive learning environments, innovation in education programmes, further development of the knowledge domains and the training of professional and competent students.

The cooperation between all stakeholders and the performance of 'learning by doing' innovation projects in *Kenniswerkplaats* contributes to the development of a vibrant living and working environment while retaining identity, social cohesion and an enterprising and competitive economy.

The intensive cooperation also creates new participatory, flexible and sustainable networks, work alliances and communities of practice.



Students exchanging with stakeholders in the area

The social background of Kenniswerkplaats

Changes as context for our actions

The countryside is more vital than ever. At the same time, it is going through the most dramatic transition ever. This also strongly applies to the region of Veenkoloniën, where the city of Emmen is located. Not only is the socio-economic fabric of the landscape changing, but the pillars of the rural economy are no longer what they once were. The rural landscape is moving from being an agrarian work landscape to, increasingly, a living and recreation landscape, and this also holds true for the Veenkoloniën.

This shift is a result of complex change processes, both in society and in the physical space of the region. The causes are often supra-regional in nature: shifting markets, internationalisation, demographic trends, climate change, new production and working technologies (ICT) and similar. The physical space, the landscape, follows these processes slowly but surely. In the end, the physical space reflects what is happening in the economic, cultural and ecological arenas.

How to deal with the unavoidable? Will we combat these developments? Will we watch passively as they intrude autonomously onto space and society? Will try to – in vain – to keep them outside? Will we place them somewhere where 'they will not bother us', in order to – in vain once more – remain spared of them elsewhere? Or will we grasp this opportunity to add a new meaning to what we have inherited from the past? Shall we see it as a problem or as an opportunity? Latter is only possible if we are willing to work from a new paradigm: cross-sector, interdisciplinary, empowering citizens, and having entrepreneurs take more responsibility. This assignment is too large and too complicated to pick up as local government, province, enterprise or knowledge institute. In the joint approach however lies the basis for the regional knowledge arrangement as this has been taking shape in Veenkoloniën region, under the name of *KennisKenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën*.

Processes such as shrinkage, changing age demographics, changing economic pillars (or the lack thereof), climate change, urbanisation and leisure have an enormous impact on our daily lives. This transition is so intensive and far-reaching that we have no ability to deal with it in today's administrative and economic context. The conventional tools that we generally reach for are not up to these tasks. These tools, as well as our approaches and our working methods, are rooted in sector-based thinking. But this thinking in terms of water, agriculture, economics, nature, recreation, traffic or culture, with all their structures and organisations, no longer appears to be effective. Generally speaking, the sectors are organised very effectively from the inside out, but also differ strongly from each other. Their quality and value are high; make no mistake. Within themselves, the sectors have generated an enormous amount of professional knowledge, and above all we must protect and use this knowledge. But where the sectors intersect, the very places where the major knowledge questions arise, the cooperation is difficult to get off the ground. All experts speak their own language, have their own tools and rely on their own financing channels. Space for one function often comes at the cost of another, not only physically and financially but in the minds of the general public as well. At some point the limits have been reached; a situation that is being enhanced by processes such as crisis and social transitions such as shrinking or changing age demographics.

In general, there is perfectly good solution for a problem within a single sector. But the point is that the major questions nowadays arise where the sectors overlap. How do we make sure that global warming does not make our own existence impossible? How do we keep cities and towns vital as their people get older? And how do we pay for all this in times of the financial-economic crisis? These are the major knowledge questions that no single sector has the answers for.

So we have to ask the knowledge questions together. All parties have to work from their individual problem definitions to arrive at new, shared questions. They have to become aware of the transition assignment, want to create new knowledge together and jointly learn how to get there.

Who are the actors? And who is the director?

In the *Kenniswerkplaats*-model as it has been established in the Veenkoloniën, the region is the coordinating and responsible party. The region Veenkoloniën consists of nine local and two regional public entities and of two water boards. Together they have worked out a regional programme that has been implemented by the program office *Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën*.

The educational institutions cooperate with the thirteen parties mentioned above. It is important that this knowledge arrangement is made use of on the administrative level. Thanks to the Leader and Belvedere programs, the last twenty years we have learned a lot about participation processes and making plans together (place making). In the practice we see, however, that it often stays at the plans, mostly due to lack of decisiveness and funding. This is why *Kenniswerkplaats* is directed towards a multi-year partnership programme between the region and the knowledge institutions, not as ad hoc partnership but as an ongoing knowledge cooperation. The current policy is the foundation, but of course, this too can always be supplemented with innovative concepts.

From stakeholder to shareholder

The parties or actors are not seen as stakeholders, but as shareholders.

What's the difference? Stakeholders have an interest and want to benefit from it. Shareholders do too, but they also take personal responsibility for benefitting not only on their own stake, but to that of their fellow shareholders as well. Give something to get something is their motto. Co-responsibility is the keyword.

This means also sharing finance and investment. Take the example of educational grants for innovation in education. These resources on a multi-year basis can be combined with the regional innovation funding from various ministries, the EU and the regional and local authorities. Such sharing is the only way to make output happen and get the less flexible parties (like the educational sector) on board.

A major advantage of a multi-year partnership between these parties is that it allows complex area development processes to be apportioned into distinct working steps, and appropriate measures solutions to be sought in dialogue with the public and the corporate sector. But... this also calls for different attitudes, assumptions, methodologies and expectations on the part of all players: a new knowledge domain is emerging, and it is time for us to survey this new situation and get a grip on this new context as a basis for innovative action. This is the reason the VHL lectorate in Regional Transition launched *Kenniswerkplaats* experiment.

The present-day countryside

You can look at the countryside from a negative point of view: decay, disappearing of social networks, farms and services. But you can also look from another angle: there are new networks and economies developing in the countryside and around the cities, there are new farmers coming up, with a different kind of business and a different attitude. They take advantage from modern challenges: water management, energy production, landscape development, residential housing, recreation and tourism – the driving force of the modern rural economy. New chains or forms of cooperation, new connections with the cities nearby or other sectors, the global orientation in combination with the local one – these are trends that we can observe if we look good. And think of the benefits this can deliver to a region as the Veenkoloniën!

Another driving force of the rural and sub-urban space are the residents themselves, the people who live there. They appreciate the right balance between the working- and living landscape, between the production- and consumption landscape. That offers the possibility to capitalise on this new position of the rural areas by new employment, new products and new cooperation structures.

And what about the citizen?

People want to live where they feel good. And the more remote an area is, the more important the cultural and spatial qualities of this area are to make people want to stay there and consequently making the area economically and culturally lively and vibrant. However, it is also true that the more remote an area is, the harder the impact will be of decrease in quality and the replacement of unique qualities by generic ones, for instance, "silence and space". Therefore, there are three issues that we have to clarify:

1. What can we influence
2. And what not?
3. When speaking about what we can influence, what do we want to achieve? And how?

Actually, this is about our perspective on our surroundings and subsequently, about what is necessary to improve it in terms of spatial and social qualities and in terms of conditions for the process of policy making in these areas.

These processes are very complex. And surprisingly, it are often outsiders or students who can help making the difference. They come with new perspectives and can help you developing a new paradigm. We like to call such pathways "slow advice". That means not going for the fast success that usually does not last and gets taken over by the next trend. Instead, *Kenniswerkplaats* always looks for the complex and knowledge intensive projects that are not managed by short-term, time wise and financially. If one takes more time, one discovers opportunities that were not evident at the first sight. This as such is a new paradigm for the public sector and the entrepreneurs.

Going back to the citizen, he gives the rural area (including the smaller towns) an enormous power by his multi-faceted appearance. Due to the variety of residents, rural areas nowadays are almost a reflection of an urban community where many qualities, education levels, professions and hobbies are represented. This multi-faceted picture has to be mapped in order to actually use this advantage for development.

Unintentionally, in the current situation we are frustrating it rather than that we use and stimulate it. If you confront the citizens with strict rules and ready plan (take it or leave it), you turn a supporter into an opponent. The modern resident then will use his competences in order to frustrate the planned developments that he does not approve instead of making them stronger by support. The citizen desires a cooperative public administration and the politicians would like responsible citizens – these are concepts we often hear of, but that still lacks an operational framework.

'Readability' versus 'liveability'

How does the business and public administration handle this? Which instruments and methods are being applied? And what is the contribution of new processes such as a village development plan, mind maps and integral design processes for strengthening of the cultural context? The citizen would like to see identity and 'integrality' in his living environment. He wants his public spaces be self-explaining and accessible. This is a concept that is not yet well defined, namely, how do different sector demands fit in the same space? Here we talk about a shift in paradigm. We are dealing here with questions that are not yet explicitly asked, but that can well up easily.

Here as well, slow advice is wise. The one who takes time understands the question behind this question. It is important here to first understand the question before starting to search for the solution. In the Netherlands, we got much experience in the field of giving culture and history the lead in urban development. Almost every province has its own version of a village area plan. Concepts such as village agenda, village development plan or village structure vision all point into the same direction. But who's going to assess all these plans? How do we link them? How do we communicate with the empowered citizens?

This is what 'new governance' is really about. The incubators of the new countryside have to be pointed out.. Who are the new entrepreneurs and what are they up to? What sets the citizens in action? How can we make use of their endogenous potential for a new economy that already exists? How can we support and stimulate them?

The citizen-farmers as major land property owners

This is the reason why we need to get to know the citizens. This new group acts on individual basis and therefore cannot play yet any significant role in the policy making. But at the same time, this group represents the owners of large areas of land, at least in the area of the urban networks. We look at it as hobby activities, but the results of an earlier research show a different picture. The “hobby farmers” in the Beekdallandschap Drentsche Aa (urban network Groningen-Assen) for example, or in the area around Deventer (urban network Deventer, Apeldoorn, Zutphen) – as an individual they do not play a role. However, all together they own 75% of the land. This is an enormous power that can be used contra-productively since they are able to cancel new plans in the regular consultation rounds. Because of their individual character, their power cannot be utilised with the available policy instruments. Two worlds clash here; the one of the planner, designer, engineer and governor – top down, and the one of the not institutionalised citizen – bottom up.

Unlocking a new knowledge domain

From this confrontation the new knowledge domain has to be developed. A new knowledge domain? Yes, definitely, because we are still used to look at our world from a sector perspective. We are dividing the reality into small pieces. That is understandable since our world has to be easy to govern. The sector knowledge is worthwhile to maintain but it has to be managed from a shared vision, a vision that focuses on the people and their living surroundings.

Such a vision is by default trans-sector, meaning it is fed from the knowledge from the different sector domains, but only if adding something new by learning from each other. We must try to integrate all significant issues of in the countryside: urban planning and architecture, water management, energy transition, the nature development, the recreation and above all, the rural entrepreneurship.

This complex social context is a great challenge; especially for the educational- and research sectors. The educational institutions are willing to translate new knowledge into study programmes. They want to have direct links with the future professional activities of the students and therefore they design the curricula and new teaching methods based on the issues in the field. This way the higher education system is able to influence not only the practice at the city council, the provincial governing body or the water boards, but also the daily work of entrepreneurs and citizens. This way a learning environment is created that is focused on complex regional issues: a learning environment that according to certain indicators will lead to improvement and enhancement of the innovative power of the relevant region, in this case the Veenkoloniën.

The Big 5

Kenniswerkplaats is a learning, working and research environment (in the sense of a physical location, but also in the sense of a community) set up with the objective of increasing the innovative capacity of the region. This is achieved by carrying out different projects that are linked to each other in an inspirational learning environment.

The stakeholders of *Kenniswerkplaats* are what we refer to as the Big 5: entrepreneurs, government, educational sector, research and environment (meaning the public and the social organisations, in the context of the living environment). The ambition is to achieve a process of transition in and with the region.

Kenniswerkplaats seeks to achieve different type of results than what one is used to when carrying out assignments that are brought in by external commissioners or when learning in a traditional institutional environment. The stakeholders of *Kenniswerkplaats* focus not only on the assignment, but also on the way and extent of the professional development achieved (competences and HRM) as well as the embedding and the sustainable effects of the results in the region and the knowledge structures.

In other words:

1. Structured cooperation between different shareholders (multi-actors) based on a shared vision on the region and the ambition to establish a process of transition;
2. A commitment to learn and to work together encouraging innovation and potential of transition;
3. Establish applicable solutions (in addition, having effect in the long term);
4. Multidisciplinary approach; given the complex character of the problem (preferably, multi-level and in combination with knowledge and experience in the agricultural, technological, economic and social fields, also keeping in mind the current practice and familiarity).
5. Focus on sustainability; this is based on a shared vision and design as an integral process that is supported by approved methods and instruments.

As a partner in *Kenniswerkplaats* it is essential to be able to invest in the development of communities and the establishment is a process-oriented organisation. Learning, innovating and transition means to be “together on the way” and “to be ready to surprise and to be surprised”.

The Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën, a platform for the regional innovation

Nine municipalities in the provinces of Drenthe and Groningen, two water boards and two provincial governments work together in the cooperation structure Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën. This resulted from the activities of the *Commissie Structuurversterking Veenkoloniën* (Commissie-Hoekstra) that mapped out the problems in the Veenkoloniën in 2001. There were three of them: unilateralism, dependence and a negative image.

The economy as well as the landscape is unilateral. The economy is based mainly on the potato and the sugar beet and therefore it depends on the funding from Brussels. The education level is, like in many regions, too low and there is a lot of subsidised employment. If these issues are tackled, the image of the region will improve and the economy will become stronger. This is a complex assignment.

The program office of the Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën coordinates a program that consists of seven themes and diverse projects within these topics. By working together towards a common goal, a culture has been established in the Veenkoloniën where new developments are seen as challenges and the opportunities are taken up.

For the identification and working out of these opportunities the cooperation has established a program office that operates as an agent between the government, business, educational institutes and the citizens in the area. A perfect incubator for the regionalisation of knowledge. It is, therefore, also not surprising that the region Veenkoloniën is a leader in this field on national level. Thanks to this culture, there are new structures and networks established where innovation and renewal in the area is given a chance.

The task given to the Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën is rather complex. Therefore, it has taken many years in the Veenkoloniën to establish a cooperation between the region, the research- and educational sectors. They started out small with a pilot-*Kenniswerkplaats* in a small protestant church in Annerveenschekanaal. In an experimental stage students were linked with the issues of the area. The results were promising and that was a reason to expand the pilot to a regional knowledge arrangement. In the new area programme for the Veenkoloniën, that started in 2008, one of the objectives was to establish a *Kenniswerkplaats* for the Veenkoloniën region.



The members of the Programme Office of the Agenda van de Veenkoloniën;
From left: Alje van Bolhuis, Ko Munnike, Eric Mulder, Patty Kooger, Mirjam Steenberghe

In order to achieve a real regional knowledge arrangement, a cooperative like this has to get more body and structure. For this reason, a knowledge agenda was set up in cooperation with the stakeholders. This agenda describes clearly to which objectives the knowledge institutes can contribute. Here we talk about not only researchers, but also about instructors and students of the educational institutions of different levels and backgrounds. In addition to that, the projects are identified not only in terms of content, but also money and time.

In order to establish the knowledge agenda, the projects from the regional program were assessed: do they fit in education and research curriculum and we found clear differences between implementation projects (business as usual) and knowledge intensive projects.

First, we talked to the representatives of the education and research field. We asked them whether they want to engage in regional projects and under which conditions. In these discussions the idea of the knowledge arrangement was born. There must be a match between the Big 5 (the government, the educational sector, the research sector, the entrepreneurs and the environment) to lay foundation for a good cooperation among them. The knowledge agenda of *Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën* is being filled up with projects coming from the local businesses. We now can observe a growing interaction between the knowledge institutes and the regional actors. According to the steering group of the Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën, *Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën* contributes to boosting entrepreneurship in the Veenkoloniën. Businesses relatively easy get access to knowledge and innovations developed at the participating educational- and research institutes. In addition, staff of *Kenniswerkplaats* develops their so called transition methodology, which on its turn delivers input to answer new fundamental questions: How to encourage more cooperation among the actors in the Veenkoloniën; how to learn more, take other roles? In other words, how can we together achieve a stronger and higher innovation capacity in the Veenkoloniën?

The Veenkoloniën as a learning region

Many regions are willing to invest in a multiannual knowledge arrangement. It is now time to establish structural agreements for the cooperation partnerships. The Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën has already reached an advanced stage. It is possible for other regions to learn from this experience.

In December 2008 the Regional Contract '*Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën*' was signed between the members of the Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën, the ministry of Agriculture and a number of educational- and research institutes, namely Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences (as coordinator), Wageningen University and Research Centre, Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen, AOC Terra, Stenden University and Groningen University. Later the Alpha-College also joined the alliance. The main objective is to contribute to the development of the Veenkoloniën region, formulated in seven themes. The starting point here is the cooperation between the so called Big 5: the government, the business, the research, the education and the environment.

All participating parties take responsibility for innovation. In practice, they meet each other at the implementation of the projects. These projects deliver new insights and new knowledge, as well as mutual understanding. The intention of *Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën* is to offer a learning environment where not only students and teachers increase the scope of their knowledge and change attitude, but also local and regional civil servants, governors, entrepreneurs and the citizens. The current assignments encourage intensive cooperation. The objective is to increase and strengthen the innovative power of this region by new knowledge, new ways of cooperation, by research and strengthening the qualities of the stakeholders, including the civil servants and entrepreneurs. Even on national level the ministry of Economic Affairs & Agriculture has a special interest in *Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën*. They appointed *Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën* a national pilot to clear up to what extent the cooperation and of knowledge arrangements are applicable at other regions as well..

Since 2009A we've worked on improving the infrastructure to facilitate the cooperation between the educational- and research institutes and the region. The Knowledge Agenda Veenkoloniën is an important building block in this process. Linking students, instructors and researchers with

civil servants, entrepreneurs, and citizens through projects, leading the projects in terms of both form and content, giving feedback to the schools and the project managers, municipalities, provinces, everything is in full swing!

Now that the infrastructure is being developed, there is a belief that the processes around these projects and the process within *Kenniswerkplaats* have to be well monitored and analysed. A method can be developed now that can be transferred to other regions.

The Veenkoloniën region is looking for a next step. It is willing to let the regional development and knowledge dissemination go hand-in-hand and to develop and unlock the public knowledge so that it is available for different target groups. There is also a great interest into the AD-pilot project in *Kenniswerkplaats* where a study programme customised according to the demands of the entrepreneurs in the Veenkoloniën is being developed and which is taught mainly in *Kenniswerkplaats*. This way the quality of the agricultural (evening) school is back: middle and higher professional education is around the corner.

As a result of smart combinations, the value of the regular education can give a significant impulse to the regional development. This approach provides a model for transitions in many regions in the Netherlands and even abroad.

Statements

Politics

The concept of *Kenniswerkplaats* was invented in the Veenkoloniën region. How has that been possible? After all, the willingness to let the professional education institutions and the students play a role in the development of the regions and the businesses were already in place. Jaap Verhulst tries to explain.

"One of the questions was how the field and the educational sector can use each other's strengths in the process of transition for regional development. In 2004 *Kenniswerkplaats* in the Veenkoloniën was initiated. It was located in a beautiful small church in Annerveenschekanaal.



Jaap Verhulst, former director North, Directorate for Regional Affairs, Ministry of Economic Affairs

"Regional *Kenniswerkplaats* as incubator for innovation"

Next step was signing the cooperation contract three years later, in 2008. Many parties were going to work together and share knowledge. The ministry of Agriculture was also represented. This structure was an unusual one since the regional parties, the government and the educational- and research institutes have agreed to use their knowledge for the development of Veenkoloniën. *Kenniswerkplaats* approach was chosen as the underlying structure.

In order to speed up the process, many national and regional meetings were organised in the period between October 2009 and July 2010. On June 22, 2010 a national congress "*Regio aan Zet*" was organised and the publication the volume "*De Lerende Regio*" was published. 775 delegates participated in this congress representing a number of regions, the government, water boards, educational- and research institutes, businesses and other stakeholders. The audience of this congress and the kind of discussions taking place gave evidence that the *Kenniswerkplaats*-model as it was developed in the Veenkoloniën can count on very great interest.

Innovation is of high importance for the Minister Cabinet. As a Ministry we stimulate innovation by working together and innovating in the 'golden triangle' (Education&Research, Business and Government). The model of *Kenniswerkplaats* encourages innovation in regions and areas on issues

that are important for these regions.

I firmly support this approach as an incubator for renewal. The model of *Kenniswerkplaats* is not linked to buildings and institutions. Instead, they are the initiators, people from the educational- and research sectors and regional governments who work together towards solutions of issues and problems. Target oriented cooperation and finding solutions and innovations for the rural areas in diverse regions, that is the strength of this concept and that is appealing! The Ministry of Agriculture supports this warmly!"

Baukje Galama has been the mayor of the Municipality Stadskanaal since September 2009. In October 2010 she became the chair of the Steering Group of the Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën that she is now getting familiar with. What Baukje Galama, a newcomer in the region, found striking was the will to look integrally through the Agenda at what the region needs.



Baukje Galama, Mayor municipality of Stadskanaal and vice-chair of the Steering Group Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën

"There are a lot of opportunities in and for the Veenkoloniën. Here a high level work ethic since many generations is striking. People are active, they make use of the opportunities and should they fail, they look further for new opportunities. They dare to take risk. Of course, there are problems and limitations; however, they should not prevent us to act.

The role of the government has changed. We now are used to turn to the inhabitants of the region for advice. They are the experts, they face the problems and see the opportunities the best and they ask the knowledge questions. A nice example is the project *Groene en Blauwe Diensten* ("green and blue services"), that was carried out by the Agricultural Nature Association Eastern Groningen (ANOG): the idea for this project was brought to *Kenniswerkplaats* by the farmers themselves. It is an innovative project that will result in economical and smart use of land.

For the new issues in regional development, such as climate and energy, it is necessary to combine our efforts. The role of the government is to stimulate and to facilitate and to keep abreast with the times. It is true for all parties that they are used to run their "business" in a certain way and if it is going well one probably tends to leave it as it is. However, the world around you changes constantly and it is your own responsibility to maintain your position. And that means that you have to bring up the ideas yourself as well as to start the development process.

The Agenda and *Kenniswerkplaats* play a significant role in the search for renewal. The fact that one asks questions and does research, links theory with practice and dares to think out of the box contributes to the regional development. In my opinion, the obvious added value of *Kenniswerkplaats* is its role of a driving force. The knowledge questions reveal the needs of the future generations and new solutions and questions appear as a result. This aspect is a very important one.

I cannot support the remark, which is made from time to time, that people from the Veenkoloniën region are not really willing to learn. If this was true, there would not be any knowledge questions. In my opinion, there is a demand for learning and also a recognition that one should learn in order to develop

one's self. Together with other parties, but also together with other regions. I am largely in favour of working across regions, as working, living and recreation are not generally limited by boundaries of an area. Through cooperation an area can improve itself and also generate more (i.e. knowledge, activities). This is the baseline for the "Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën" agreement.

"Stimulating, facilitating and gain progress in time"

Alderman Herman Kuipers is a member of the Steering Group “Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën” for the Vlagtwedde municipality, and has “De Kenniswerkplaats” amongst his tasks/portfolio. He is excited about the concept, which is not illogical – Kuipers has a long career related to (vocational) education, which has brought him even into the premises of the Ministry of Education in Zoetermeer.

The alderman speaks with passion about the *Kenniswerkplaats*-project on windmills, where he worked together with students from Larenstein University of Applied Sciences. ‘These students were actually entrepreneurs, young dairy farmers; in search of economic benefits. They are really looking for revenues, what can I get out of this? I really needed to place some effort into bringing forward other arguments, such as spatial quality and finding better, alternative locations (for windmills). They were mainly focused on implementation of the assignment in a technical way. In the beginning, they perceived me as being a bit traditional within the “Ground for change” philosophy, being more modern themselves and into generating profits. This made us get into very lively and interesting discussions, finding arguments supporting our points of view and finding a baseline for research.

Their assignment was to find locations. They did a lot of research and talked to many people. All in all, they found out that it requires quite some, often quality oriented, effort to find a wider support for projects with such an impact. What I saw was that these students made great progress in (developing) their points of view,



Harrie Prins, member Daily Council Waterboard Hunze en Aa's and member Steering Group Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën

through working under real life time pressure. I myself learned a lot as well. The discussions with the students and the material they produced broadened my point of view and enabled me to think more freely.

This proved to be a huge added-value. An alderman often needs to manoeuvre within strict boundaries of political structures, public servants' perceptions, the vision and attitude of investors and the public opinion. In this process it is very interesting to be able to think out of the box and to do so together with students, who have a slightly different perception of the world around them. For me, therefore, *Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën* is an encouraging yet basic addition to the process of onward development in the *Veenkoloniën* region.'

The Hunze and Aa's Water Board is one of the two water boards that participate in the *Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën*. Its main interest is the water management of the area. In the *Agenda* some interesting (water) issues had been discussed, which were then picked up in a much broader context than usual, given the fact that the Steering Group members are generalists rather than specialists.

‘As Water Board we always follow the guidelines of “safety”, “sufficient” and “clean”. This implies reducing the risk of flooding through a thorough management of dykes and embankments, enlarging the



Herman Kuipers, Alderman of the municipality of Vlagtwedde and member Steering Group Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën

"Students often see the world just a bit different"

"Good water management is of key importance"

storage capacity of the water system, ensuring there is sufficient water, and guaranteeing clean water through waste water treatment plants.

In the project 'Room for Water', commissioned by the Agenda, a strategic vision was developed on water issues in the whole region. Climate change will have a larger impact, making a good water management in the *Veenkoloniën* region to become an essential factor, as the area is abounding in water.

The Water Board contributes to the regional development in the *Veenkoloniën* through planning the (lay-out of the) area in such a way, that safety can be ensured for both humans and wildlife. This implies disposing of any surplus of water, and in times of drought letting water in through the same system of weirs and pumping stations. This is mainly in the interest of the agricultural sector, which still represents a large economic value in the region. Of course, we are not only taking care of this single sector, but for all residents and stakeholders in the region as well. We therefore also look at issues, which other institutions need to deal with, through the '*Agenda*' and beyond. We have to deal with many partners and therefore need to take into account all kinds of issues and aspects, as our actions can always have an impact for one or more parties. Vice-versa, actions of other parties may have an impact on the water system – hence, you will need to cooperate.

The projects as described in the *Agenda*, are all being implemented through *Kenniswerkplaats*s. My image of *Kenniswerkplaats*s is one of engaged people, who are motivated to develop the projects they are committed to. Knowledge engagement is delivered alongside a large deal of enthusiasm, making *Kenniswerkplaats*s capable of contributing largely to regional development. Though as a commissioner you need to be aware that not all results can be used in daily practice. It is always easy to develop an 'idea' and try to implement it, but you also need to remain realistic in your expectations. For me it is more important that people are motivated to work on regional development issues in such a way. As I see it, you cannot simply lean back and wait until something is happening. Here in the *Veenkoloniën*, in order to achieve improvements, we have acquired a certain innovative power, mentality and awareness that we need to engage ourselves. This, however, requires that councillors and governors create the right conditions, allowing for chances and opportunities to be picked up and thrive.'

The baseline for the *Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën* is a regional programme. This will act as a guiding principle for any initiative that can support regional development. In a broad setting, the Steering Group, with support of the project working group, will pick up the various themes. Naturally, there is a certain focus on agriculture.

'I have always been involved with the *Veenkoloniën* region, being a regional manager for the North of Groningen until 2008 and later also for the Eastern part of the province. What strikes me is that the *Agenda* also firmly takes into account social aspects. After all, you cannot live on 'landscape' alone. It is quite unusual that development is taken into account in such a broad sense. Even if nowadays, when expenditure is being cut, the regional programme is requested to become more selective and involve subjects as population decline, this still could make the programme as a whole even stronger.

In terms of space and landscape, the *Veenkoloniën* region represents a phenomenal area, with quite distinct and specific (spatial) qualities. In general, the image associated with the region is not too positive. However, the region is known all over the country. It is good to have a cooperation that can maintain itself even in times of budget cuts. The *Agenda* platform is quite remarkable, with the region as a whole not being governed by one single authority. This



Alje van Bolhuis, Region manager Eastern Groningen, province of Groningen and programme manager *Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën*

"Through cooperation more power in the *Veenkoloniën* region"

can be challenging as you might stand stronger towards others if a region is represented by one authority. The support of the (local) government for continuity and extension of this cooperation in the future is certainly there. I can see that several parties – municipalities, provinces and water boards, each with their own set of problems – working together closely to make the Veenkoloniën region more powerful. However, the *Agenda* should receive a more clear profile to stand up on a national level. This position should be strengthened in order to generate more funding opportunities.

A region cannot ‘speak for itself’, and likewise does not have its own good or bad ‘feelings’. Problems and opportunities are always connected with people. In order to improve the innovative power of a region, you will need to find forerunners, such as young farmers who dare to take on initiatives, and schools that actively want to cooperate. Public authorities can stimulate this, also financially, but it is the people themselves that need to be activated. We need people like Willem Foorhuis to drag and pull ideas forward, but simultaneously you need locals who are “rooted” in their peat lands, and who can translate this vision into practical actions, both for their governors and the residents of the area. The *Agenda* has an important role in this, as it is contributing towards the regional development process.

Everything is based on enthusiasm. It is very promising, that there is cooperation and opportunities are taken on in the regional programme, and implemented through the *Agenda* within *Kenniswerkplaats* Veenkoloniën. Although I have doubted the *Kenniswerkplaats*-idea as such in the beginning, it has shown to be a good approach. I do think however, there is still more to gain from this setting.’

Education

There is an increasing number of practice oriented projects in which students, lecturers and sometimes also researchers jointly work for commissioners. Especially the universities of applied sciences are stimulating this trend, in line with educational renewal and the will to strengthen the learning environment of students.



Ellen Marks, general director Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences and member general board of directors Wageningen UR

"University of Applied Sciences Van Hall Larenstein follows the perspective of educational innovation and further development of our already competence-oriented education system. In our new strategy we speak of **community learning**, a concept that dovetails with the way of cooperation used in the *Kenniswerkplaats*-model.

For us, the demands from practice towards a structure of cooperation between public authorities, enterprises, education and research are quite new. Preferably on a regional level, where we have gained experience with the so-called “knowledge-counters”. These are commercial advice centres run by knowledge institutes through student projects. We have understood that today’s challenges and assignments – the so-called “regional transitions” – require a stronger commitment.

From a historical perspective this reminds me of the three party approach in agriculture (of education, information and research to the benefit of farmers in the 20th century). In this also internationally appraised approach, advisers and researchers literally sat down with farmers at the “kitchen table”, which linked the farmer and his practical questions directly to teachers and students from (vocational) schools and academic researchers. This approach has often resulted in remarkable innovations.

The system was reduced towards the late 20th century, as it was becoming too expensive for a (too) small professional sector. Even so it was a perfect system that supported several goals. The experiences of that time were a trigger for the lectureship of Regional Transition (RT) of the Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences to search for a new support system for both regional

**" Working together
in learning together"**

policy and entrepreneurship in this field: the three party approach restyled. This was our baseline for developing the *Kenniswerkplaats* approach. The challenge now is different from then. More complex, interdisciplinary and cross-sector. The so-called 'green education' section cannot pick up on all issues. This also explains the knowledge alliances being developed from the lectureship of RT; both from (lower)vocational schools to University, and from "green" (agricultural, nature, landscape, food etc.) to "grey" (infrastructure, social and health care, non-rural economy, etc.). A lot can be learned from this, and I am fully aware that it is not only about projects, but most of all systems' innovation. In developing the so-called *regional knowledge arrangements* within the, also regional, *Kenniswerkplaats*, a quest for restructuring the educational system was also initiated. Our educational system is still too much internally oriented, and we have the ambition to develop a more structural cooperation between education, research and practice.

The knowledge institutes require an internal transition of its own. From our experience with the *Kenniswerkplaats* model so far, it has also become clear that regional and local authorities, water boards, and other stakeholders, including entrepreneurs need to cooperate more closely, in order to jointly give shape to regional development. This transition therefore applies to all of us, and the cooperation with *Kenniswerkplaats* is no longer non-committal for anyone!

***Kenniswerkplaats* from an academic point of view is an interesting approach, especially for an individual student who would like to pick up an important issue in society as additional subject, for example a regional demand or question. But I do not see this concept as the only future (approach) for the research and education sector as a whole.**

"Most certainly *Kenniswerkplaats* has an added value. A knowledge institute does not always has a commissioner as such, and in this approach it still is possible to link students with interesting knowledge oriented questions. Also, *Kenniswerkplaats* offers an opportunity to link students at all levels (from vocational schools to university) to – jointly – work on very specific issues, and to have a wide variety of parties, such as governors and entrepreneurs, join forces in this quest.

However, it turns out to be difficult for our students to carry out projects through *Kenniswerkplaats*, as the courses follow a quite strict regime, which often does not match the regional questions. In this sense we cannot really respond to the "knowledge agenda". Despite the questions being very interesting, you will therefore not always find the matching students being available to deal with them. On the other hand you may question if the knowledge agenda is flexible enough to deal with changes, both in terms of (regional) demands, and in supply of students.

You may also question if the education system really matches the field of work itself, if it cannot offer any training in 'real life' assignments. This does not only refer to the *Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën* and *Kenniswerkplaats*, as we also have a cooperation with Oldenburg and Bremen in Germany. It is remarkable that the students often are not interested in what their fellow-students or researchers are presenting. Some of the research into a subject can be very comprehensive, but offers too little perspective in order to transfer the results into practice. *Kenniswerkplaats* is comparable to what the "Science Shops" at Groningen University have to offer. Here we also deal with complex subjects, also in partial projects. The results are then taken into account in follow-up projects. But as opposed to the *Kenniswerkplaats* approach, in our Science Shops we do not follow the same structure, where also the "commissioners" keep track of what is happening in their research question. De *Kenniswerkplaats* works with a "knowledge agenda", and that is a big advantage.



Dirk Strijker", Professor cultural geography/
Professor by special appointment for rural
development

"*Kenniswerkplaats* as an added value"

Our approach is purely content-oriented, with rarely any perspective towards its practical applicability. This is the main reason why the (*Kenniswerkplaats*) approach is less suitable for us.

I believe the *Agenda* at this moment is still too narrow in its orientation, being primarily oriented towards physical, spatial and economic aspects. What I miss is (some) attention towards social deprivation and its imaging. Maybe you should look towards a more generic approach of a region, from which you can then derive some tailor-made subjects for the students. The mismatch between the character of a study course and the form of *Kenniswerkplaats* now excludes a large group of students. This is still largely open to improvement.'

In the framework of the 'learning region' we are trying to join forces in a certain area, learning together and working together in order to generate an agricultural sector with well-trained entrepreneurs. This is part of the challenge to be a passionate and successful entrepreneur in this field.

'In this sense it is no longer sufficient to only be a skilled worker; entrepreneurship is becoming increasingly important. Entrepreneurs should look ahead and learn to cope timely with changes confronting their business. They should learn how to translate these into new opportunities for their enterprise.

We are eager to contribute to the benefit of society, by establishing new links between rural areas and (their) citizens. As a lecturer at Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences, I am therefore happy that we pay attention to practice-oriented developments. The Rabobank, one of the main Dutch banks (also) working in the field of agriculture, has noticed the aforementioned development. Often enough, the required economic and financial skills are insufficiently available with agricultural entrepreneurs.

Based on various signals from the sector, Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences has developed the idea to start a study course called *Associate Degree Ondernemerschap* (Entrepreneurship), or ADO in short. This two-year study course can contribute to the development of a sense of entrepreneurship and, therefore, to a healthy agricultural sector, finding its place in an ever growing European market.

The ADO course helps agricultural entrepreneurs to further develop their skills and to become a better entrepreneur, both in terms of the business in itself and its environment. The ADO course is oriented towards anyone who want to improve their skills and competences after finishing vocational school, but who are not willing or not able to follow a complete study programme on a higher level. The course addresses agricultural entrepreneurs and those working in related fields (machinery, supporting services). Part of the course is developed together with entrepreneurs from other regions. This leads to an exchange of experience between various areas, making the course more interesting. The entrepreneurs take on their own business as part of the course, developing their business plans as a part of the course, with support of teachers and external trainers. At the end of the course each participant has extended his or her network, with business contacts and additional knowledge within his/her field of work and the agricultural sector as a whole. Also, he or she has developed and presented a well-founded business plan for his/her enterprise. The newly acquired knowledge and the officially approved qualification enable the entrepreneurs to transfer their knowledge to fellow-entrepreneurs, generating enthusiasm which in turn will contribute to a learning region.'



Jacob Duinstra,, lecturer entrepreneurship and management

"This study course contributes to a positive green entrepreneurship"

Jan van der Valk



"In the past you had a sort of standard knowledge, belonging to a university of applied sciences. This knowledge was the product of the university, and the lecturers could refer to this for a number of years. The current practice is almost entirely opposite to this. As a university of applied sciences we need to be directly and indirectly connected to the dynamic outer world. Lecturers need to know thoroughly what is happening in practice and thereby need to be linked with researchers; only in this way we can deliver a new generation of students, matching the market demands. This commitment is so fundamental, that we cannot achieve this connection through temporary projects only. This is not durable. We need a new structure and that is one of the outstanding features of *Kenniswerkplaats*. In this respect the multi-annual approach of the Regional Contract is important as we can organise ourselves within this framework. But even more important is that we can build this system with external parties, who actually have a key interest that this system is established and maintained!

The process should be derived from the reference framework of the school as such, but should stem from the actual owners of the regional assignments and problems. The school should not be the one to actually decide on the content of the agenda (which often is the case), but this should also be determined by the region. A region should confront the school with its learning questions, rather than the regular situation in which a school seeks these by itself. With the system of a regional knowledge arrangement we have found a great starting point."

Wout van den Bor



"This way of working is for the benefit of all parties. We therefore strive to achieve an increasing number of learning arrangements in practice. Not only with individuals or groups of entrepreneurs, but also in larger and more multidisciplinary networks. We therefore chose to be a partner of *Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën*, in which students are working on questions and assignments dealing with rural developments and regional transition. I feel this is important, as we wish to establish this practical connection both organisationally and educationally"

"It is nice to see how the cooperation of our students, lecturers and researchers together with their colleagues from other organisations establishes itself in a quite 'natural' way within the knowledge arrangement for the Veenkoloniën. Even more interesting are the results of this cooperation. The methodology of *Kenniswerkplaats* has now become a joint product. We now see it as a shared quest to further shape and develop this approach, and to link it to our study courses and practice oriented research, as this now is happening in our 'ateliers' and our knowledge centre for area development (*Kenniscentrum Gebiedsontwikkeling*) NoorderRuimte.

It strengthens the move we are now making from education to a knowledge institute. Apart from the transfer of knowledge we now also have a task in collecting and creating new knowledge and in stimulating a more research driven attitude with the students. We try to achieve this through practice oriented research. This implies research that is driven by a concrete question from public authorities, institutes or enterprises, of which the results will be applied in practice. This will always happen in various alliances with external parties, within and for the sake of the region. That is what counts in the end; that we can deliver students who can deal with tomorrow's questions and thus can contribute to the necessary innovations in how we think and work."

Elvira Ardon-Visser



Research

Wageningen University and Research (WUR) makes interdisciplinary groups work on demand-driven(research) questions, as compulsory part of the curriculum. Researchers are increasingly confronted with region-oriented knowledge questions. *Kenniswerkplaats*, therefore, is a suitable format, being closely connected to demands and questions of a region. Its students, together with (external) experts, are very interested in dealing with complex projects, in which they can gain practical experience.

"Naturally, you need to deal with a certain image a region may have. "Australia" is by far more interesting to a student than "Veenkoloniën". Despite this, I believe *Kenniswerkplaats* Veenkoloniën offers the very questions that are more closely related to our study courses and fields of expertise. The Veenkoloniën region has developed some concrete demands for change, as well as demands to generate innovative knowledge. *Kenniswerkplaats*, therefore, represents a quite workable approach, as it closely matches both demands and questions of a region, as well as the interests of students and experts.

The *Kenniswerkplaats* has developed the principle of a 'knowledge agenda', translating the area and its policy-oriented challenges into the very knowledge required to resolve these in an integrated manner. This implies a multi-annual research programme for the region, which is more than a mere collection of individual projects. In *Kenniswerkplaats* there is no such thing as "research for research's sake".

The good thing about such questions is that they match the various levels of education of the students. I have noticed that lecturers, students, and researchers become increasingly enthusiastic on working on complex issues, challenges and assignments in the regions. It is, however, useful to formulate sub-questions and link each of these with a level of education, as at this moment many assignments are (too) complex as such, and therefore not always suitable to be worked on by students.

By working with smaller and more direct questions, students will see more clearly that their individual research fits into a larger overall picture. Results will now be transferable to the next set of questions. The more specific a question, the better. It will also help to bring together several levels of education, dig in deeper into a subject and really find answers to given questions.

Even if you are 'stuck' to a programme or agenda, you should never exclude additional knowledge questions, as new demands for knowledge may always occur in a region. It is essential to envisage what the region wants in a more structured way: what are its questions and demands? Only after this, you can try to resolve these. More on the role research plays within *Kenniswerkplaats* may be found in a separate brochure that can be downloaded from:

<http://kennisKenniswerkplaats.eu/kennisKenniswerkplaats/publicaties-kennisKenniswerkplaatsen>.



Cees Kwakernaak, Researcher Centre water & Climate of Alterra and project leader 'Waarheen met het veen'

"*Kenniswerkplaats* is a suitable working form"

Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs now live in highly dynamic period: with changes occurring within a short span of time and daily problems varying widely in type, size, and appearance.

'Problems concerning the crisis are relatively short-lived compared to those of an ageing and declining population. But which entrepreneur can really afford to deal with these questions, when he first needs to resolve an urgent credit-related question with a local bank?

The regional perspective can be very clarifying in this case. On this scale one can look across certain boundaries, creating new cooperation networks at the same time. It may seem obvious that one's environment is not limited by a municipal or provincial boundary. In this respect the region will increasingly be the key level, guiding so to speak. When previously often enough entrepreneurs within the same industry or background were getting in touch to cooperate, nowadays new dependencies and synergies will be established. A (glasshouse) fruit and vegetable grower will no longer cooperate with fellow plant growers, but with an energy company, as this will not only help him in his demand for energy, but could also supply him with additional "by-products" such as heat and CO₂, which may be used efficiently in his glasshouses. Something comparable may be the case when a plant grower has a transport company next door, which could likewise offer his services to him.

The regional perspective will also be apparent in the demand for good and well-trained staff. Future employees will seek other conditions for their living and working environment, than they may have had in the past. In future, the environment in which the entrepreneur is situated maybe the key factor.

But (at least) just as important will be an intensified cooperation between entrepreneurs, education and public authorities. Nowadays these stakeholders are getting used to cooperate, however a real cooperation with a joint objective, such as development of a region is still less eminent. The reason for this may be that the various stakeholders have their own orientation and objective, and do not have a perspective of how they may benefit from such 'real' cooperation.

As long as an educational institute is evaluated only on the number of diplomas, without the obligation to evaluate whether the students have really added something to a region, one cannot speak of any substantial cooperation or regional development.

Only through real cooperation economy of scales and synergy may occur, to the benefit of the region as a whole. This can only be achieved if the whole region is involved in a joint learning process. Also the continuous upgrade of knowledge in this process is invaluable, both on the level of an individual and for an organisation or the region as such. When Life Long Learning is to be the key issue for your employees, your enterprise should also learn to deal with its 'new' employees. No longer should people adapt to the systems they are working in, but the systems need to be matched with the people.

By the way: looking at the learning impact or output, this article will prove to be a bad example. From reading through this article your "learning yield" may be some 10%, whereas if you would have experienced the situations in real life, this already would have been over 80%. And this is still apart from all other advantages your enterprise may have gained in the future, from being an active part of a learning region. '

"Importance for the future of entrepreneurs "



Hans Drijfhout, Stork Industry Services, member of supporting group and 'Steering Group, Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën

What is the added value of *Kenniswerkplaats* for education?

Two lecturers, *Gerrie Koopman* and *Ben Helming* (University of Applied Sciences Van Hall Larenstein) will reflect on this question in this chapter

Changes in society nowadays are difficult to trace, and even more to handle, from *within* our educational institutes. In order to offer a better perception of what a rural area is, or a village, what makes it “tick” and even more, what keeps it liveable, Larenstein University of Applied Sciences has taken the initiative to develop the *Kenniswerkplaats*-approach.

We point out to our students, that changes occur within a short time span. Farmers need to invest and extend in order to maintain their business, ‘hobby’-farmers are rising in numbers and have started largely to contribute to rural areas. Villages and their environment are transforming themselves from an agriculture-oriented rural economy into vital and multifaceted village communities. Over 90% of the rural population is no longer working in its own area or even region, making “housing and living” into an important economic, social and cultural factor in rural areas. Furthermore, the mentality in rural areas is changing. The modern citizen demands a larger space for leisure, and wishes to be involved when his living environment is being (re-)designed and developed. Added to this, the issue of water management results in both threats and opportunities. Rural areas are reinventing themselves, trying to develop a new place in society. These transitions require our educational system to fit better, more directly in the day-to-day practice in both urban and rural areas.

The transition process requires a strong rural management. The new generation of policy makers, designers and managers (the students of today) should be well-prepared to this new, complex challenge and assignment. This is primarily a task for higher (professional) education, but also the academic level (universities) and vocational schools need to play a role in this. After all, we are training students for a professional work area that is not yet defined. In short, the *Kenniswerkplaats*-approach to us implies that both students and lecturers are being immersed into a day-to-day, practical situation, in which both parties will be learning. Lecturers will contribute their knowledge and skills, but need to keep them up in day to day practice. Together with residents, experts and commissioners the students and lecturers will work in a real life environment. The aim is then to root this learning environment into a place where ‘it’s all happening’: *Kenniswerkplaats*.

The first beginnings

As lecturers we were immediately enthusiastic about building a permanent connection to every day’s practice. The first physical *Kenniswerkplaats* was situated in the village of Annerveenschekanaal, where the “education” partners were immediately involved into developing a participative urban plan for the villages of Annerveenschekanaal and Eexterveenschekanaal. The municipality of *Aa en Hunze* was the commissioner here, for a project named *DAIP* that was financed from the (national) cultural heritage development programme *Belvedere*. The project required to be in line with the regional revitalising programme and should also contribute a spatial vision, to be implemented in the inter-municipal spatial development plan for the municipalities of Aa en Hunze and Veendam. *Kenniswerkplaats* as such was situated in the former Lutheran church of Annerveenschekanaal. Several of our student groups from all our courses and locations, together with their lecturers, experts, residents and public authorities, have been confronted with the intellectual legacy of *Belvedere*, which they translated into a cultural heritage development map of the area.

After finalising the *DAIP* project, many others were to follow in a similar regional setting, such as drafting a village vision for *Gasselternijveen*, and a rural area (development) vision for the municipality of *Aa en Hunze*. After this, several successive student groups worked on (partial) projects as



part of the 'Biography of the *Drentse Aa*', the central stream running through the *Veenkoloniën* region. Scientists from Groningen University also participated in this project, finally leading to the quite recent article *Using the Rural Atelier as an Educational Method in Landscape Studies*, by Erik Meijles and Bettina Van Hoven published in the 'Journal of Geography in Higher Education' (London, October 2010).

Developing further

After the kick-off and pioneering phase of students and lecturers from our University of Applied Sciences in Annerveenschekanaal, the *Kenniswerkplaats*-approach has grown steadily. In December 2008 a contract was signed to spread this educational approach even more widely, closely linked to the so-called "Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën". The contract was signed by two universities, three universities of applied sciences, one vocational school, the Ministry of Agriculture (now merged with Economic Affairs) and the Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën, in which nine municipalities, two provinces and two water boards are participating. This also allowed for establishing links between all forms of education (and research) between the pre-vocational school level and that of universities. Until recently student groups have been working on several (parts of) projects belonging to the *Gebiedsprogramma Veenkoloniën*, a regional 'area programme' for 2008-2012. The original *Kenniswerkplaats* as such found its new location in the premises of the *Hunze en Aa's* Water Board in Veendam. Also, a new *Kenniswerkplaats* was initiated in both the regions of Southeast Drenthe and Northeast Friesland. And, based on these experiences and stimulated likewise by (local) public authorities, nine more *Kenniswerkplaats*' initiatives were to follow throughout the Netherlands.

The importance for education

For students, *Kenniswerkplaats* will provide an extensive learning experience, as they are learning and working in, and together with their practical work field. They are faced with the actual challenges in urban and rural areas. Complex issues such as 'living environment' and 'liveability' can now be visualised more readily, and the student will get a better impression on changes taking place on a regional or local level. Students are still studying, but remain rooted in their field of work in a practical way. This is very motivating for students. *Kenniswerkplaats* also offers students a better opportunity to interconnect their curriculum with their learning progress. *Kenniswerkplaats* makes students more aware of their position and role in a dynamic field of work, providing them with a school for interdisciplinary cooperation, and an experience that may well help them in their future professional careers.

Kenniswerkplaats-concept also offers several challenges to the lecturers. By bringing the school to the region and vice versa, practice oriented education can grow and be established substantially. A big advantage, both to students and their teachers, is that one can look beyond the boundaries of individual educational institutes and school systems, establishing a form of cooperation that was not regarded as possible.

Kenniswerkplaats-concept does require a flexible organisation that responds to current issues brought up by the field. That requires a different attitude of both management and teaching staff.

Linking education and the various *Kenniswerkplaats*-projects largely depends on the enthusiasm and flexibility of individual teachers. Teachers on a secondary educational level are often used to work individually, whereas the *Kenniswerkplaats*-concept demands a different attitude. Teachers should, therefore, try to implement the *Kenniswerkplaats*-approach into the study courses in a creative way and from there develop readily applicable course modules. Once this flexibility is established, it is possible for an integrated learning environment to develop and thrive.

This is easy enough to write down, but how can this be implemented in practice? This is a transition in itself, and we are glad that we have managed to reach a point now, where we can ask ourselves the following questions: How do I organise such a process? How can we keep everyone on board? How do you cooperate with your competitors? How do we achieve innovative capacity really to increase and to remain on a higher level? How can we really reach a community of innovative learners?

The practice

What does Kenniswerkplaats do?

An interview with Henriët Buikema

Henriët Buikema was manager of *Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën* in 2009-2010. As such she encouraged cooperation. There is a number of lines connected to *Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën* and the role of the manager is to organise and encourage these numerous linkages. She does this together with the staff of *Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën*, with the *Agenda for Veenkoloniën* and the steering group inspired by the concept that forms the fundament of *Kenniswerkplaats*. This way, *Kenniswerkplaats* can achieve its objectives for application, circulation and creation of knowledge.

What are your activities?

My activities are connected not only with *Kenniswerkplaats* itself, but also with requests from the region and embedding these into existing organisations.

1. Let us start with *Kenniswerkplaats*. In order to better link *Kenniswerkplaats* with the "Big 5", we have divided the tasks at the team of *Kenniswerkplaats* in different clusters, namely, Support, Development & Implementation, and Consolidation & Anchoring. These clusters are interlinked and they cooperate intensively with each other. The cluster "Support" has developed models and instruments, which are applied and adjusted in the implementation process of the knowledge assignments. An example is the transition model that is described below in the section 'Working, learning, consolidating'. We also organise events for exchange of knowledge (such as initial meetings, forum of ideas, workshops, interim- and end presentations) and we have created tools and a handbook for monitoring the progress of the whole process of working and learning. Next to that, we also help at finding suitable assignments, sharpen the objectives and develop concepts for implementation of the project assignments. Here you can see the items nicely listed, however, the real life situations are very variable. By application of the same, well-considered concept at *Kenniswerkplaats*, one can observe astonishing results: it lives, people work and learn together and they strive towards explicitly formulated development processes.
2. Next item is the question of the region. The dynamics at *Kenniswerkplaats* depend on the assignments coming from the region. At weekly meetings with the Programme Office of the Agenda for the Veenkoloniën we keep each other updated on developments in both *Kenniswerkplaats* and the region. Because of this, we can react to actual issues and adjust our projects at the right time. And above that, this working meeting contributes to a constant and fruitful exchange of knowledge.
3. And finally, the anchoring in existing organisations. On the governmental level, the Steering Group of the Regional Contract installed a regional group in January 2010, the members of which come from important parties, such as professional education, the enterprises and the *Agenda voor Veenkoloniën*. Frequent exchange of information among these partners takes place frequently; every two months there is a meeting with the manager of *Kenniswerkplaats*. We can faster discover and solve our bottlenecks. After all, this is also where the principles of *Kenniswerkplaats* are really implemented. It is a dynamic process, also here with the transition model as guidance.

What is not Kenniswerkplaats?

Kenniswerkplaats is no project factory, focused on arranging projects for students. *Kenniswerkplaats* looks at things differently. First of all, all parties commit themselves to mutual learning, secondly they create a sustainable cooperation, an alliance. Establishing a multi-annual and durable process between public authorities, education, research and entrepreneurs in this way, it is essential to organise and structure the cooperation.

How are you organised?

Development and application of new concepts, methods and instruments is essential for *Kenniswerkplaats*. For this reason, links have been sought with the experience of the project *Value in the Valley*. This is a cooperation among different educational institutions and enterprises in North-Netherlands. This cooperation developed a learning arrangement where pre-vocational and higher level (university of applied sciences) students jointly implement innovative assignments for organisations and businesses in the fields of environment, energy, agriculture and engineering.

The students are being accompanied by teachers from the respective educational institutes and experts from (local) enterprises. The working form developed there and the methodologies implemented provide an excellent baseline for deepening and strengthening *Kenniswerkplaats*-approach. This has led in the end to the graph as depicted on this page.

The structure of *Kenniswerkplaats*s

Kenniswerkplaats belongs to the region, in this case to that of the Veenkoloniën. Therefore, the vision of the Steering group for the “Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën” will be guiding for us. Through this Steering Group and of course the Project Group and the Programme Office, we will receive our assigned projects.

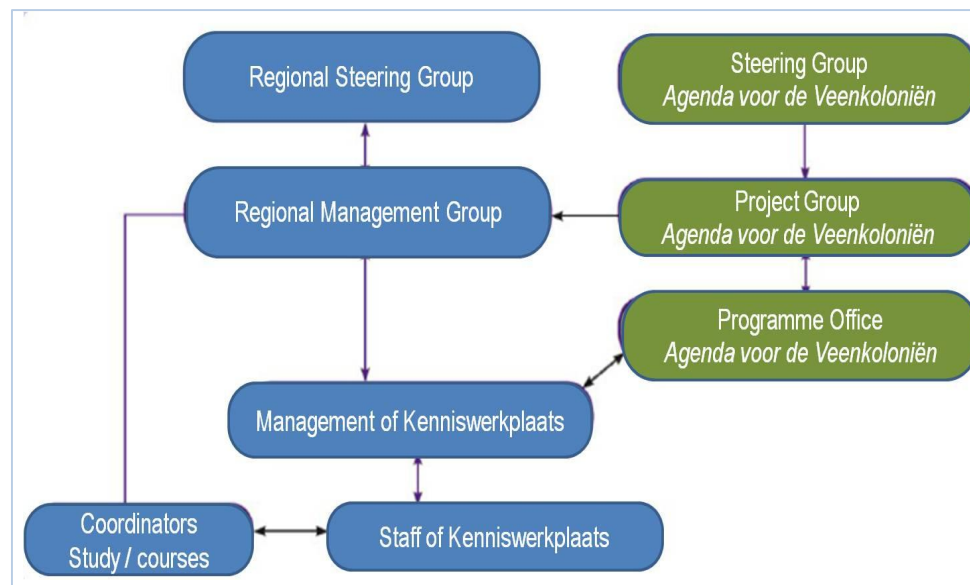
At *Kenniswerkplaats* we directly cooperate with the staff of the programme office on a daily basis.

Apart from this guidance from the region, de *Kenniswerkplaats* also has its clear guidance from the knowledge institutes and the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

Once a year the governors assemble in the so-called “Steering Group for the Regional Arrangement Veenkoloniën”. This group monitors the regional contract and sets the general direction to be followed in the current year.

For implementing this monitoring and guidance a separate Managing Group has been established. This group meets every 6 weeks and consists of school principals and the executives of the Region. Additional to this group, entrepreneurs will also participate. This Managing Group then determines the way, in which *Kenniswerkplaats* will be embedded within the knowledge institutes, both content-wise and organisationally.

The third tier is being formed by the management of *Kenniswerkplaats* and each of the coordinators from the knowledge institutes involved. This will be supported and validated by the so-called support group, also part of the staff of *Kenniswerkplaats*.



The transition model for innovative learning and working

The transition model has been developed in *Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën*. It provides a framework for implementing and evaluating the learning and working process in *Kenniswerkplaats*. The characteristics of learning and working in *Kenniswerkplaats* as a learning environment are quite different from that of an average study course, training or internship: it is interdisciplinary, cross-sector, multi-shareholder, and there are various organisations and systems involved.

As there is no clear concept yet of how to shape such a learning and working process, *Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën* has established a support group. The task of this support group is to develop concepts, instruments and approaches. In order to support, facilitate, organise, evaluate and continuously improve learning and working. Alongside the project-oriented working in the region, smaller learning and working communities are

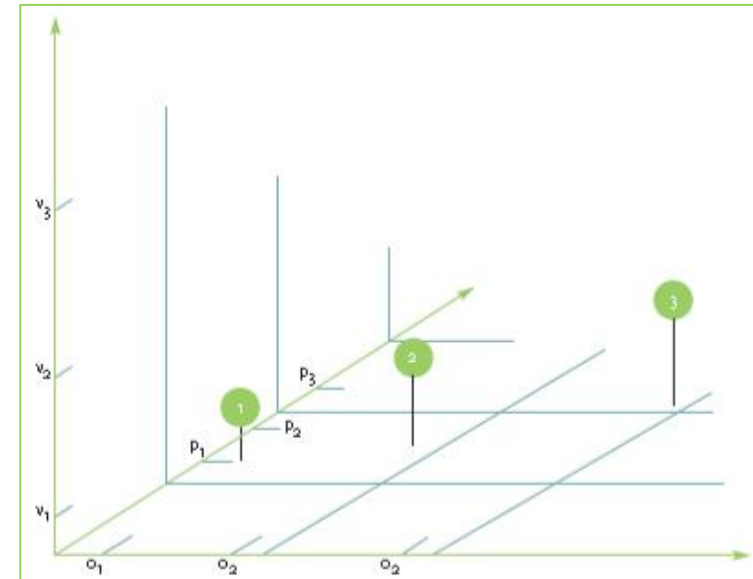
A contribution of Petra Cremers. She is a member of the support team, together with Geert Bomhoff, Hans Drijfhout, Eddy Hekman, Ben Helming, Frans Hoetink and Evert Mulder

being set up, in which all stakeholders will be learning while working, and working while learning. It is essential then to understand each other's language, establish links between (mutual) goals and interests and develop synergy through optimising the diversity

Working, learning, consolidating

In order to start cooperating and learning together effectively in region-based projects, the support group has developed a model that can be used as a joint reference framework for all stakeholders. Working on these projects in a region can be regarded from three different angles. In the model, therefore, three dimensions are distinguished.

One of these is the working in projects (P): each project has an objective and it is essential to have this objective achieved. Another angle is that of learning (O): how do the participants of a project develop themselves, what do other stakeholders learn of this and how does the organisation's approach develop itself in the process? A third angle is that of a true regional transition (V): How can the project results and the knowledge gained along the way be implemented, secured and consolidated within a region, thus obtaining a lasting impact of the project.



The model may be used in several ways. Each project that is being implemented in a region can be positioned in the model. In each dimension the ambition can be indicated. Through this, the expectations of all stakeholders (the Big 5) can be adapted to one another.

Apart from this, approaches and instruments can be developed and implemented: for the project dimension these may be, for example, methods for working in a project-oriented way, creativity instruments, techniques for presenting results, or guidelines for communication with the commissioner.

For the 'development' dimension (O), in order to facilitate the shareholders' learning, educational methodologies can be applied such as workshops, methodologies of feedback and reflection, and conversation techniques for multi-stakeholder processes. The dimension "sustaining" (V) will include procedures and strategies, in order to seek and involve all relevant processes and parties in the region, leading to the project results being 'grounded' in the region in an optimised way.

Yet another function of the model is the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of processes and results. In each dimension the ambition levels and related quality criteria can be formulated. Let us illustrate this through an example: making old smugglers' paths re-accessible. The result of this project could be that the pathways are reopened and the students will be awarded their study credits. Hence, a singular goal in the project dimension and the review of students in the 'development' dimension. A much higher ambition level may however be described as such: all stakeholders have learned of the project and it is being used as an example for other projects. A nature-education programme has been developed alongside the pathways, and a voluntary organisation has been set up for the maintenance. The entrepreneurs in the area have been involved, in order to organise tourist 'thematic weeks' on the routes and their history. In these thematic weeks also historic themes from other projects have been included.

In this sense, through supporting the working and learning process within *Kenniswerkplaats*, the approach will be further developed, fine-tuned and broadened.

Fundamental lessons

A case as a learning moment for *Kenniswerkplaats*
An analysis by Willem Foorhuis

Building blocks for *Kenniswerkplaats*

The RAAK-SIA - project *Veenland (Moorland)* – interactive renewal as important learning point from within *Kenniswerkplaats* in practice. An important building block in developing *Kenniswerkplaats*-methodology was the experience derived from this project. Even though it entirely did fulfil the objectives of the RAAK-SIA programme and it achieved the results originally envisaged, the partners were not quite satisfied with these. Why is this?

The project took on the not yet defined philosophy of *Kenniswerkplaats* as a starting point. The philosophy implies that all parties will be learning, not trying to do away with some projects and having them carried out by students, but by jointly creating a learning environment, articulating its own knowledge questions, in search of new connections and new roles. After all, we would like to increase and strengthen the innovating power of a region through new knowledge, new forms of cooperation, but also new research and the strengthening of competences of civilians, governors, teachers and students, civil servants, and entrepreneurs.

Being easy enough to think of and to write down, but how do you actually organise this? The RAAK project hereto took the approach of a multi-stakeholdership, a directed process in which several stakeholders come to cooperation. In hindsight, this was thought of in a too simplified way. Everyone stayed in their 'classic role', thus no synergy, no real cooperation and no shared responsibility being achieved whatsoever. Creating a learning environment proved to be quite different from simply following and applying the rules and regulations of a multi-stakeholder methodology. In this chapter we are happy to guide you through the RAAK-project: the first phase, which has been finalised recently, and the second phase that is currently being built from own experiences. With these experiences and the knowledge resulting from tensions within the project, *Kenniswerkplaats*-methodology as described in previous contributions had been developed, showing how a failure can still lead to something beautiful.

The situation

The Groningen–Drenthe moorlands, situated in the primal valley of the Ems River, belong to one of the most valuable landscapes of Europe, as seen from the cultural heritage perspective. This applies to each of the individual areas but also, moreover, to the region as a whole. Some 3,000 years of human intervention and creating the landscape according to the needs of its residents can be reconstructed from its remnants, as they have been conserved at short distance from each other. This has been presented in existing studies, which give an impression of the historic and social diversity, having left a mark on the several layers and manifestation within the landscape.

The problem

The moorland is known for its rich set of cultural-historical layers, which however may only be accessible to those who are trained in "reading" the landscape. The very fact that this region is now lagging behind socio-economically, and is in search of new economic pillars, highlights the importance (and values) of the landscape and its cultural qualities. This implies a need to seek a more integral approach; an approach will be initiated by the *Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën*. But meanwhile the landscape and its qualities are suffering from a planning and policy driven fragmentation, making its perception as an entity virtually impossible. The area is still perceived as an – agricultural – production landscape, whereas 'living and housing' has actually turned into its key economic sector. There it has become the challenge to find a good balance between the cultural heritage and the large scale dimension the area is representing, and between the desired sheltered environment and cultural identity. As a result of this, many projects are being implemented that do not strengthen each other's qualities, but rather strongly compete and contradict each other, which does not lead to improving the quality of the living environment of this area. Large-scale glass-house sites are being built next

door to designated areas for developing nature, as are noise producing sports areas alongside peat bog reserves, which may be seen as highly contrasting. This way, the unique values of this region tend to be flattened out even more.

The RAAK-project

The RAAK-project *Veenland* used this field of tension as a starting point. By bringing together stakeholders and by bundling the projects into a 'multi-stakeholdership' in close collaboration with research and education, would strengthen the integral approach, that was the expectation. The project was based on a project within the Belvedere programme – a national programme on strengthening the assets of cultural heritage – “*Between Hondsrug and Hümmling*”, two ridges on either side of the border. This project did lead to a substantial research in qualities and developments in the rural area of the Emmen municipality, and adjoining areas in Emsland/Germany. This is the region of the former moorlands of Bourtange, where vast areas of high-rising peatbog were enclosed by two sandy ridges, the “*Hondsrug*” (“dog’s back”) and the “*Hümmling*”, thus literally designating the area and visualising the project. In this project a large number of parties has cooperated to map and visualise the qualities of the Veenland area (producing a ‘Veenatlas’, map book of the area), focusing on its own identity as a starting point and inspiration for further developments. The cooperation network consisted of the Province of Drenthe, Municipality of Emmen, Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences, the BOKD (Broad Consultation Group of Small Villages in Drenthe), *Staatsbosbeheer* (State Forest organisation), *Recreation Board* of Drenthe, Drents Plateau, Stenden University of Applied Sciences, AOC Terra vocational school, and, additionally, it included a large number of (area-) experts, planners and designers.

The RAAK-project was important for three reasons:

1. The alliance in charge of the project application, led by Van Hall Larenstein, wished to experiment with a coordinated regional approach. Due to some changes in the funding, a large number of projects had been defined and connected to a designated budget for this region. This led to certain urgency in implementing the projects at first. However, the ambition was then formulated to innovate the approach by not implementing the projects separately after all, but in a programmed, orchestrated way. For this reason, the so-called *Veencompagnie* (moorland company) was then established, in order to coordinate these projects.
2. The alliance was seeking a methodology, in which the *Veencompagnie* was not only coordinating, but also ambitioning to achieve a synergy between the partners, becoming an integral process, by means of a multi-stakeholder approach. Quite a number of stakeholders have thus been brought together in this area within the process, in which they have been undergoing a development, bringing them from self-interest to common interest. In this way a learning arrangement could be developed, as used in our terminology of our regional *Kenniswerkplaats*.
3. The alliance wished to contribute to the further development of the *Kenniswerkplaats* methodology in the region Veenkoloniën. That is why they perceived the *Veencompagnie* solely as a point of organisation and coordination, but also as learning environment, being a unique feature of *Kenniswerkplaats*. The project was thus oriented toward ‘work based learning’, in which education and research were closely cooperating with the daily practice. The question was how the *Veencompagnie* could shape a Community of Learners with these goals: jointly learning, meaningful learning, and focusing on achieving transferable learning assets. In this manner the *Veencompagnie* turned into an extension of *Kenniswerkplaats* “*Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën*”.

Through the three objectives mentioned above, the *Veencompagnie* would achieve a mode, in which the interests and input of the different players would be brought together, following a multi-stakeholder process, and would be managed from a central spot, being the *Veencompagnie*. Thus the *Veencompagnie* would operate as a *Kenniswerkplaats*, a structure in which public authorities, stakeholders, education and research all are trying to achieve the same objective jointly, being to extend and strengthen the cultural and social-economic quality of this sub-region. Intensified cooperation has been established during a year, with partners such as the province of Drenthe, the municipalities of Emmen and Coevorden, the Recreatieschap (managing recreational facilities) Drenthe, the Veenmuseum (moorland museum Barger-Compascuum) and the

knowledge institutes Stenden University, AOC Terra and Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences, in order to programme and implement the various (sub) projects. In the project application this was mentioned as follows:

'Based on the experiences in Emmen Revisited, and following the cooperation in 'Tussen Hondsrug en Hümmling', we have established a broad cooperation. In this partnership we have connected the sector interests of the economy (Stenden), rural development (Van Hall Larenstein), housing (housing corporations Wooncom and Domesta), agriculture (LTO Noord), social affairs and welfare (Sedna), tourism (province of Drenthe), entrepreneurship (Chamber of Commerce) and civic participation (BOKD). The aforementioned public institutions will contribute their specific knowledge to each of these domains, but they will also develop a new paradigm for rural areas by linking their knowledge, which can also be transferred to other peripheral area, both in The Netherlands and in Europe. Our consortium will be extended though including a business partner that will establish a link to the implementation plans. In order to also achieve a broad connection to the German border area, the EU-cross-border organisation Eems-Dollard-Regio (EDR) has also committed itself to our cooperation'.

The process – A false start

It soon became apparent that the project had made a 'false start', which has led to some very interesting learning assets. What we mean by this 'false start' is the following:

In advance there has been no identification and exploration with each of the individual players. Because of this, each player was bearing its own project and its own goal. An extra distorting aspect of this was that the players each contributed projects, which had already been limited to certain boundaries in time and money, making the expectation focused entirely on implementing these projects.

This led to almost each of the players visualising a clear and own interest prone project result. Even if there was a shared vision in terms of an objective to developing the areas as a whole, this did not relate to cooperation, investing in social capital, the methodology to be followed that should also be focused on sustainable development in the region, the creating of new knowledge and the change of attitude.

No renewal, no learning environment

Kenniswerkplaats often uses the motto: 'You don't have a problem, you are the problem', but that implies that the stakeholders should play a different role in the process than they did in this case. In the RAAK project, therefore, there was more or less 'business as usual'.

Veencompagnie moved as being a collection of individuals; each player has its own goal and there is only cooperation for pragmatic reasons, focusing on achieving the one project goal already set in advance; there was in fact no individual and joint learning desire for those participating in the collective whatsoever.

The original ambition was to build a learning environment with all players involved. All stakeholders should participate actively in the learning arrangement. Students, teachers, supporting staff, public servants, citizens and entrepreneurs, the management of the *Kenniswerkplaats Veencompagnie* – they all should be part of a community in which the focus is on learning collectively, and not solely on the results of individual (partial) projects. Reasoning as such, the ambition level of the RAAK-project was that of a '*community of learners*'.

Implementation projects as developed and applied for in *Kenniswerkplaats Veencompagnie* are often not suitable, as the focus is too much on implementation.

The cooperation network

The choice of players to find each other by chance is insufficient to carry out a project. The learning achievements will be too small. Additionally, not every project will be suitable for this concept; we are rather seeking specific projects with a high level of complexity.

But for such a development it is necessary that all stakeholders are working from the same perspective of goals and cohesion, allowing for the concept to be secured on several levels with both the institutions and persons involved. But in order to set some steps in this transition process, the willingness to learn is essential. In other words: the process of multi-stakeholdership in itself is insufficient to obtain all objectives

In this context students are often seen as welcoming and especially cheap labour. Especially in working fields, in knowledge domains and in regions with a high grade of fragmentation and where it is a real challenge of bringing together these individual, in order generate new experiences and knowledge and develop operational projects that are not just to be carried out within in a limited timeframe and budget!

Lessons learned

From the analysis above, the results of the RAAK-project may be summarised as such:

- ***Learning demand*** – The participants should see the importance of reflecting frequently and in a structured way on their role and contribution in this process of regional transition,
- ***Learning question*** – The participants need time and space to articulate their own learning question in an environment together with others, and to be willing to invest in learning together with and from each other in a community of learners,
- ***Learning movement*** – The participants should be able to adjust their project and preferably combine it with other projects, in which it is the ambition to establish a lasting, sustainable transition,
- ***Knowledge development*** – The participants need to have a demand to jointly develop knowledge in a learning network of individuals,
- ***Transition process*** – The project needs to have a strongly transitional character; working from a theme such as (population) decline, of which everyone knows that the current roles and approach are not sufficient to meet this challenge.

From multi-stakeholder to multi-shareholder

How to proceed?

The lessons from the *RAAK-project Veenland* and *Kenniswerkplaats*-methodology developed on site have formed the basis to prepare a new project. No implementation project, but a project with a knowledge intensive assignment. What became clear quite soon, is that a theme as population decline is a key issue within the field of work of *Kenniswerkplaats*. Population decline as such is an important aspect of regional transition and every player knows that he or she can only play a role in this, when one is thinking from a different paradigm and also find another role and responsibility in this.

We have found out that it is easier to bring partners to self-reflection in a complex challenge, in which also learning questions need to be formulated. Thus all players will develop a learning attitude, leading to so-called community of innovative learners, which is essential for *Kenniswerkplaats*.

The theme of population decline was such a knowledge intensive challenge:

- *The Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën* strongly needs to deal with this process and therefore welcomes such an experiment.
- Reasoning from the perspective of population decline the knowledge institutions also needed to formulate new learning questions. Here the demand to participate in a process of empowerment of communities in areas in decline arose: can a village manage itself?
- Education and research were seeking a project that was focused on improving the vitality of rural areas, by literally empowering a village. This also is a key aspect of dealing with population decline.

A new learning step

Hence it is all about finding a new form, a new phase in the process; from *civil involvement* to *civil participation*, and from there to *co-responsibility* of the citizens. This project could thus seek a newly designed multi-stakeholder process, focusing to create alliances between parties operating locally and regionally, who can do more with less money but may also take over responsibilities from each other. This will lead to a more integrated policy development and implementation that through this can apply more easily means, opportunities and expertise, in order to transform civic participation into co-responsibility of citizens within equal partnerships.

From Place Making to Place Keeping

This framework is of specific interest to the municipality of Emmen. This municipality is developing a new policy for its more peripheral, non-urban areas. Here they also wish to apply their policy instrument *Emmen Revisited*. *Emmen Revisited* is a sustainable programme that is managed by a designated programme office. This office is well-known throughout the country, in respect to civic participation processes within and concerning the urban districts of Emmen.

Emmen Revisited has the ambition to further develop its methodology. It is intended to develop new competences for the parties involved, especially concerning the place-keeping aspect, creating a joint and lasting, working-, investing-, operating- and managing alliance. As a foundation for this project the method of *Emmen Revisited* has been analysed, in advance of setting up the project. Learning questions have been formulated, strengths and weaknesses of the current methodology established, in order to articulate the questions in line with the assignment on behalf of Emmen. Location for this assignment has been the villages of Barger Compascuum and Nieuw Dordrecht.

Main issues in the project

On this basis the supporting pillars of this project have been developed. The focus is on the transition from place making to place keeping. Identification and practice oriented research are specifically looking at: what is place keeping, which experiences have been made, what are best practices or do's and don'ts? More on these issues can be read in the working paper '*Place Keeping – Working in new alliances*'.

The cooperation

Next step was to find potential partners within the project. In the region of Southeast Drenthe six parties have emerged, who are willing to support Emmen Revisited in this process and to acquire new knowledge resulting from this process. The new coalition of Emmen Revisited now consists of four organisations.

- Emmen Revisited
- De Kenniswerkplaats
- Landschapsbeheer Drenthe, LBD (landscape maintenance services)
- Brede Overleggroep Kleine Dorpen in Drenthe, BOKD (Broad Consultation Group for Small Villages in Drenthe).

They are being supported by the *SHARE* Foundation and the association of Dutch municipalities, VNG.

Amongst themselves these partners have sought out their individual competences and qualities, and have also formulated their learning questions in advance.

Emmen Revisited

Competences

- Cooperating with partners on an equal basis, both on residential as on organisational level.
- Independent programme office.
- Cooperating with village and regional networks from the beginning.

Learning questions

- How can practice-oriented research on local endogenous potential increase the co-responsibility of local residents?
- Does this lead to a better integrated policy implementation, which then more readily applies means, possibilities, and expertise, and transfers these to co-responsibility of the local resident ?
- *Emmen Revisited* has the ambition to do research on the shifts of funds and services between 'centrally' and 'locally', in order to ensure continuity of the process. How should this be organised?

De Kenniswerkplaats

Competences

- 'Learning together' by working together; *Kenniswerkplaats* has set up a system that allows a durable cooperation between knowledge institutes and public authorities/stakeholders.
- Creates an operating learning environment for all participants.
- Creates a joint learning environment for developing competences, being in this case the village of Nieuw Dordrecht and its surroundings.
- Establishes cross-links to analysis, research, knowledge development and knowledge transfer.
- Develops new learning methods.

Learning questions

- Seeking a new design of traditional roles in the processes between public authorities. For this a transferable methodology is being developed.
- In order to develop a village cooperative, it is essential to establish new legal forms and obtain competences on the village level. This will be the key assignment for the knowledge institutes.

Landschapsbeheer Drenthe (LBD)

Competences

- Stands for maintaining and developing the typical, attractive and cultural landscape of Drenthe.
- Cooperates with municipalities, farmers and other land owners.
- Supports hundreds of enthusiastic volunteers and stimulates citizens to get involved with maintaining their surroundings.
- Has an advising role in the practice of maintaining and developing the characteristic landscape of Drenthe.
- Planning and implementing is being done together with municipalities, farmers/rural entrepreneurs and private landowners: from on-site nature plans to landscape plans for municipalities.

Learning questions

- Has ambitions to obtain a new role in implementation plans; how can this be set up?
- LBD is a knowledge intensive implementing organisation and is becoming more aware of the knowledge opportunities from within its own organisation. In this way LBD wishes to develop itself from an implementing body to a supporter of partners active in landscape development and maintenance: LBD as a knowledge centre, how can you link knowledge to implementation and how do you deal with your existing and new partners, and your volunteers and target groups?

BOKD

Competences

- Representative of and stakeholder for villages and communities in Drenthe.
- Recognised consultation partner in many regional and thematic meeting platforms and groups.
- Offers a support system for small villages free of charge, also on complex issues and challenges.
- Is well-known on a national level as a developer of innovative rural policy and projects.
- Has much knowledge on local communities and cultural heritage issues.
- Has much expertise in organising training sessions and thematic workshops.
- Develops framework projects as a response to actual developments within villages.
- Provides policy advice on rural development issues.
- Cooperates closely with local public authorities.

Learning questions

- How will we increase the co-responsibility of local residents?
- How will we achieve a more integrated, better policy implementation, which then more easily utilises means, opportunities and expertise, in order to support this civic participation in a better way, transforming it into a civic co-responsibility?

Perspective: the village landscape

What is the demand arising from the village? This demand needs to be developed. It usually never comes from the village as such, nor is it a vision from the village. It is rather a perspective being developed further by involving researchers, generating input to a knowledge agenda for both village and landscape, the village landscape.

Innovative questions

1. How do we organise a **multi-annual cooperation** between the region (including knowledge institutes) and the village parties, in which jointly implementing concrete projects and creating innovative and practical solutions are the key starting points? Students and teachers of the several knowledge institutes and studies cooperate with stakeholders from a village or region, developing innovative projects through an integral approach. There is a certain focus on a local assignment, in which cooperation and jointly learning and teaching competences is important. This also applies to local residents, who in a sort of 'action research course' acquire the very competences that make them a trustworthy partner. Cooperating, learning together, jointly developing and applying new knowledge, resulting in a vital living environment.
2. **Interactive Planning, revisited:** How will we do this jointly and how will we improve? In exchange with as many as possible private and public stakeholders on both area and village level, ideas are being gathered and plans created. Citizens and entrepreneurs play an important role in this. Several, sometimes opposite demands need to be bridged in a sustainable way: agriculture, land use, recreation, tourism, water, cultural heritage, landscape and ecological quality, etc. The parties request new knowledge and transferable methodologies. Also, they wish to share the interactive vision and knowledge with similar initiatives elsewhere. And in searching new processes and methodologies, new and additional questions and demands will arise.
3. **New theme:** From the Emmen Revisited village programmes new themes are being discussed. For the period of 2010-2012 the partners have chosen to develop a major project that matches the current social and economic situation: how do we achieve village development from the motto of '(doing or achieving) centrally what needs to be, and locally what can be', and how can we secure this in a lasting way within a village cooperative?

The development of this new project from the lessons learned within *Kenniswerkplaats* has taken quite some time. But the preparations are just as important as the project itself. The EU also sees this importance, which has led to an invitation to participate in the INTERREG IVB-project 'Making Places Profitable', MP4. In due course the project in Nieuw Dordrecht will be carried out and monitored together with European partners. The results may be awaited with some anticipation.

Factsheet 2010 Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën

Owner:	Veenkoloniën Region (Groningen and Drenthe)
Investments until 2010:	1.6 M€ direct in cash, additionally 600,000 € in kind (material and staff hours)
Knowledge institutes involved:	7
Number of student hours 2009-2010:	66,000
Connected knowledge centres:	5 (Mansholt Chair at University of Groningen, Knowledge Centre Noorderruimte of the University of Applied Sciences Hanze Groningen, Research Group B009 of the Wageningen University and Research Centre, Knowledge Centre Regional Transition, University of Applied Sciences Van Hall Larenstein, and Knowledge centre Agro Northeastern Netherlands (KANON))
Number of projects:	35
Number of entrepreneurs involved:	63
Number of citizens involved:	190
Symposiums:	3
Publications, including international:	6
Delegations from other regions:	6
Delegations from abroad:	5 (Germany, France, Russia)
Dutch regions implementing the model Veenkoloniën:	9 (Groene Hart, Noord Holland Noord, Zeeland, Twente, Almere, Gelderse Vallei, Noordoost-Friesland, Parkstad Limburg, Regio Arnhem-Nijmegen)
Foreign regions who will or wish to implement the model:	5 (Region Oldenburg, Region Greifswald (both D), Region Leningrad Oblast, Region Kunming China and Region Paramaribo/Surinam)